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Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION:

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE 1990s (A/48/333)

(c) EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (A/48/70-E/1993/16, A/48/393)

(d) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (A/48/39, A/48/491)

AGENDA ITEM 104: HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (A/48/309, A/48/364)

1. Mr. OSSA (Director, Macroeconomic and Social Policy Analysis Division, Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis), introducing the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/48/364, said that in deciding to convene the World Summit for Social Development the General Assembly had recognized that human resources development constituted the main determinant of the development process. Until the recent past, the prevailing approach to human resources development had been either excessively utilitarian or mired in the ideological disputes of the cold war. The relationship and interdependence of human resources, on the one hand, and development and living conditions, on the other hand, had been downplayed. As a result, the economic results of human resources development had been fairly modest. Improvements in literacy and educational levels of the population in many developing countries had not been matched by improvements in productivity, economic growth or social conditions.

2. Since the 1980s, a new integrated approach to human resources development had been gaining momentum as understanding of the relationship between the different variables of the development process had deepened. The report paid particular attention to national efforts to undertake human resources development in a broader societal context and to establish a mechanism linking supply and demand and showed that significant improvements could be achieved even in countries with low levels of material well-being, through a reordering of social and governmental priorities.

3. At the same time, progress in human resources development had been called into question in some regions, in particular, in Africa, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, largely as a result of their unfavourable economic situation. The lack of satisfactory results in the African countries also could be attributed to the adverse external environment, inadequate economic policies and deeply rooted structural problems inherited from the past.

4. Stabilization and structural policies often had compounded problems by imposing constraints on the implementation of human resources development policies. Even in those countries where health and education expenditures had not been reduced, the rate of growth had been below the rate of population growth, with the result that per capita spending had fallen. The introduction of user charges for education and health services had worked to the detriment of the less fortunate population sectors. Access to social services had declined

(Mr. Ossa)

when structural adjustment policies had led to declines in real wages and income from self-employment.

5. The situation in the economies in transition was very similar to that in the developing countries. However, in the first group of countries the human development sectors had already been fairly advanced and, in theory, the population had been assured access to human resources development. The report indicated that those gains were in jeopardy and argued that the creation of "safety nets" would help ensure broad popular support for transformation policies. Recent political developments in the area appeared to confirm the report's analysis.

6. The United Nations had been part and parcel of the new emphasis on human resources development and it had endeavoured to establish a more effective mechanism for cross-sectoral and inter-agency coordination, while simultaneously strengthening the link between the recipient countries' specific needs and the orientation of the operational activities of the Organization. The substantial reorganization of the United Nations system which currently was under way established a clearer division of labour among the institutions in the system and called for an improvement in their operational activities to be achieved by harmonizing and simplifying rules and procedures with respect to programme cycles, evaluation, monitoring and auditing. Country strategy notes and the resident coordinator system would help integrate the field operations of the various institutions. Since most of those operational activities were directly or indirectly involved in national capacity-building, the restructuring process should improve the effectiveness of those institutions' support for national human resources development efforts.

7. However, there were some factors which might undermine efforts to make international cooperation more effective. "Aid fatigue" among major donors had resulted in an erosion of funding for United Nations agencies and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The shift in the provision of development assistance away from multilateral channels towards bilateral channels had made it more difficult to ensure adequate funding for United Nations activities. In countries where abrupt shifts in policies had been attempted in order to pursue the recommendations of donors without first ensuring broad popular support, the unpopularity of such policies sometimes had led to civil unrest. Accordingly, it was necessary for donors and international financial institutions to take into consideration the social implications of their recommendations and to broaden the content of the stabilization and structural adjustment programmes they proposed to take those factors into account.

8. The report identified complementary measures to offset the potential adverse effects of reforms on human resources development: participation of the groups to be affected at an early stage in the design of reforms, targeting the most needy groups, reorientation of public expenditure towards social programmes, increasing productivity in the delivery of such programmes and tailoring them in ways that reinforced each other. It was critical to protect investments in human capital during the stabilization and adjustment phase of reform programmes. That would avoid a counter-productive deterioration of human capability which would adversely affect economic recovery in the medium to long term.

(Mr. Ossa)

9. The emphasis which the United Nations system placed on the new approach and its efforts in support of its operational activities showed that that opportunity must not be missed. Failure now would be more costly than in the past. The international community claimed to have developed a viable paradigm for development and the United Nations system was devising the ways and means to translate it into reality. Many developing countries were making strenuous efforts to reform their economies and were placing renewed emphasis on human resources development. Those efforts deserved full support, including financial support, for investment in human resources was at the core of people-centred development.

10. Mr. MATHIASON (Assistant Director, Division for the Advancement of Women, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that previously, development had been thought to be gender-neutral. When the issue of women and development was raised, the response was a syllogism: development benefited people; women were people; therefore, development benefited women. During the United Nations Decade for Women and subsequently, reality had refuted that thinking. Development had not benefited women and men equally: development policies such as structural adjustment, which supposedly was gender-neutral, had a greater adverse effect on women than on men, and policies that did not take gender into account would not work.

11. For example, the discovery that women were the major producers of food for home consumption, especially in Africa, had been a revelation. Yet development policies were still largely designed as though all farmers were men. One global effect of structural adjustment and recession for men and women alike was the episodic and uncertain nature of employment. That had been the normal pattern for women, however, who had learned to cope with it. For men, on the other hand, it represented what could be considered an abnormal pattern. The analysis of women's experience in that area could be useful in adopting economic policies for society as a whole.

12. The report of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development (A/48/393) examined sustainable development in the light of the decisions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. It looked at Agenda 21 from a gender perspective. The report noted that, apart from chapter 24, which focused entirely on the advancement of women, many aspects of Agenda 21 had gender dimensions, and it showed how gender provided a particular perspective for the implementation of other chapters.

13. The report sought to demonstrate the possibility and desirability of mainstreaming gender concerns in the monitoring of the implementation of Agenda 21, as called for by the Commission on the Status of Women and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1993/12.

14. The preliminary version of the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (A/48/70) had been submitted for the purpose of transmitting information provided by Governments. Each edition of the World Survey had contributed something different to the understanding of development. The 1994 edition would take as its point of departure the understanding that the concept of "women in development" was being replaced by "gender and development".

(Mr. Mathiason)

15. That question should not be seen only in terms of women, but rather the relative positions and roles of men and women, particularly in terms of the roles they were assigned by society. A division was made between productive functions (production of goods and services) and reproductive functions (ensuring the continuity of society). While neither of those functions was the exclusive province of one sex, there had been a de facto sexual division of labour which was becoming increasingly artificial. The report emphasized that the issue must be seen in terms of women's empowerment, by providing women with the same resources for development as men and arriving at a point where both reproductive and productive functions were shared. A central theme would be women in economic decision-making, in order to demonstrate that empowerment of women was a solution to other development problems.

16. The division between problems and solutions adopted in the preliminary report, although resting on a sound theoretical basis, might not be the most practical means of organizing the material for the purpose of policy development. The document could also be more pointed in terms of critical issues. For example, the application of gender to the question of poverty might merit greater effort, for a gender analysis of poverty would focus on the household and its micro-economy and might suggest new ideas for policies to combat poverty. Similarly, viewing employment from a gender perspective would focus on employment patterns of individuals over the course of their lives.

17. Mr. AMBATCHEW (Director, Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, United Nations Development Programme) introduced the report of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC) (A/48/39) and the report of the Secretary-General on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries (A/48/491). Document A/48/39, which contained the report of the high-level Committee at its eighth session, assessed progress in the implementation of the recommendations made at the seventh session (held in 1991) and in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action.

18. The number of TCDC activities had increased as had appreciation of the comparative advantage it presented. Concrete achievements and initiatives illustrated the progress made during the reporting period in the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the seventh session and General Assembly resolution 46/159 of 19 December 1991. TCDC activities had increased both qualitatively and quantitatively and exchanges of experts had tripled since 1990. Despite their financial constraints, several developing countries had increased their offers of training, consultancies and equipment.

19. The organizations of the United Nations system had attempted to pool their resources and many of them were sharing costs with the Special Unit for TCDC. Consultations among agencies had intensified, and the Administrative Committee on Coordination would monitor the implementation of the new guidelines for the review of policies and procedures. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1992/41, had called upon all parties to give first consideration to the use of the modality of technical cooperation among developing countries for the execution of programmes and projects. That resolution also provided valid

(Mr. Ambatchew)

criteria for measuring progress in the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action and other related decisions. Many United Nations bodies had adopted or planned to adopt policies to accelerate the use of TCDC and promote the participation of the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

20. It must not be forgotten, however, that TCDC was still marginally utilized, was not a priority at best, and suffered from major financial limitations. The activities of the biennium 1991-1992 confirmed the importance that developing countries attached to the acceleration and expansion of the use of TCDC, and included initiatives that, if implemented, could very well make TCDC central to efforts to promote development.

21. Mr. DIALLO (Director in charge of the Division for Least Developed, Land-locked and Island Developing Countries, UNCTAD), introducing agenda item 92 (b) (document A/48/333), said that in the three years that had elapsed since the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s two broad trends had emerged in its implementation. Firstly, many least developed countries had tried to reorient their economic and social policies with a view to creating a favourable environment for sustained growth and development. That process of domestic reform was very fragile, inter alia, because of exogenous factors beyond their control. Secondly, foreign direct investment had not kept pace with the considerable efforts made by the least developed countries. With a few notable exceptions, many Development Assistance Committee countries had reduced their official development assistance (ODA) over the past few years and were not meeting their commitments. The ODA targets must be adjusted to take into account the increase in the number of least developed countries since the Paris Conference. At the same time, resources from multilateral sources of funding such as the International Development Association (IDA), the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the next phase of the Special Programme of Assistance needed to be increased.

22. The measures taken to reduce the debt stock and debt servicing of least developed countries had not been sufficient. The call by the leaders of the seven most industrialized countries at the Tokyo Summit to the Paris Club to continue to review the debt situation of the poorest countries was encouraging. The least developed countries also expected the Final Act of the Uruguay Round to include concrete provisions in conformity with the commitments undertaken in the Punta del Este Ministerial Declaration. The mid-term review of the Programme of Action scheduled for 1995 would afford the least developed countries and their partners an opportunity to place the implementation of the Programme of Action on a stronger, more balanced footing. The mid-term review would take into account emerging issues and the outcome of major United Nations-sponsored conferences, notably the World Summit for Social Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Conference on Women, as well as the consequences of the adoption of the draft international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification particularly in Africa. The debate in the Committee could also give important guidance with regard to the substantive context of the mid-term review.

23. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed regret that the Secretariat had neglected such a crucial area of activities as science and technology and had not provided the relevant documentation on time.

24. The Group of 77 was very concerned at the deterioration in the economic situation and the growing marginalization of the least developed countries. Although those countries had embarked upon substantial economic and political reforms, their efforts had been hampered by an adverse international climate and by the insufficient inflow of external resources. That had led to the widespread impoverishment of their populations, which had lost any hope of living in a better world.

25. It was urgent to implement the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. Developed countries must increase their official development assistance and productive investment, solve the crushing problem of external debt and open their markets to the products of least developed countries. International solidarity was vital if the least developed countries were to escape from the vicious circle of poverty and underdevelopment.

26. The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) must appoint without delay an Executive Secretary for the conference to be held in 1995 to review the Programme of Action.

27. Economic cooperation among developing countries must be the priority topic in international programmes. The new approach of the Group of 77 in that regard reflected its political will to intensify economic and financial ties among developing countries and to strengthen economic links between the North and the South, in contrast to the protectionist attitude of the vast majority of industrialized countries.

28. The Group of 77 and China reiterated their support for the report of the eighth session of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC). The General Assembly must endorse the contents of that report; for its part, the Group of 77 would introduce a draft resolution on the subject. The High-level Committee had adopted a strategy for TCDC in the 1990s which had laid down specific guidelines on that type of cooperation. The United Nations system and UNDP must give top priority to TCDC and earmark the funds needed to attain the agreed objectives. The aim of any strategy designed to achieve sustainable development must be to improve the living conditions of all human beings, in particular the most vulnerable groups. That involved a clear commitment to the areas of health, food and housing; education and training were also indispensable in order to provide genuine equality of opportunities for all.

29. The mobilization and integration of women, one of the objectives of Agenda 21, was fundamental. It was a subject that must be taken duly into account when considering the problems of poverty, human settlements and population growth.

30. Mr. PEETERS (Belgium) speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that the most important subject before the Committee was that of human resources development, which was an integral part of sustainable development and must be included in any new approach to development.

31. Human resources were usually the most underutilized renewable resources; however, the developing countries themselves could do much to develop their human resources. Special attention must be devoted to primary education, particularly that of girls, and to primary health care, since both sectors were the cornerstones of any capacity-building process.

32. However, in view of the fact that human resources development and human development were an indivisible whole, the implementation of sectoral measures must go hand in hand with compliance with general principles such as respect for human rights, democratization, sound public administration and the participation of all social groups in the development process.

33. While external assistance must help to promote such measures, they did not depend solely on such assistance. However, it must be recognized that structural adjustment and economic change called for well thought out palliative social measures, and that developing countries and the international community shared responsibilities in that regard.

34. The least developed countries were going through particularly difficult times. Their per capita GDP continued to fall as a result of population growth that was hindering their economic development. Nevertheless, there were differences among those countries, and some that had implemented structural adjustment programmes were already beginning to reap the benefits. The mid-term review of the Programme of Action would have to study those disparities. Obviously, the solution to the problems of least developed countries lay in a set of measures tailored to the needs of individual countries.

35. In its support for the least developed countries, the international community must respect the commitments it had entered into. The European Community had endorsed the target of devoting 0.15 per cent of its GDP as assistance to least developed countries; some Community member countries had even exceeded that target. In priority areas such as population policy and regional cooperation, the efforts of the least developed countries themselves and the assistance of the international community must complement each other.

36. With reference to the mobilization and participation of women in development and to economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, he drew attention to the statements made on those issues, on behalf of the European Community and its member States, at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

37. Nevertheless, it was not out of place to stress the great importance the European Community and its member States attached to the participation of women in development. The key role of women in various sectors and the serious obstacles that often impeded their integration into the development process had combined to give birth to a new philosophy that covered both the economic and the social aspects of development.

38. Mr. SMIRNOV (Russian Federation) underscored the importance of human resources development for sustainable development, a topic that would be considered shortly by the World Summit for Social Development, the World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development.

39. United Nations assistance projects, the specialized agencies and Bretton Woods institutions and UNDP annual reports reflected the necessary linkage between human resources on the one hand and international development strategies on the other. The report of the Secretary-General on the question (A/48/364) contained, in particular, recommendations on mitigating the adverse effects of structural adjustment programmes; focusing sufficient attention on vocational retraining in order to increase employment; coordinating State fiscal and budgetary policies; and optimizing the balanced use of economic and administrative measures in problem-solving.

40. The report also contained an accurate analysis of the human resources situation in the economies in transition. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report on enhancing the operational activities of the United Nations system, including the improvement of coordination and monitoring within the system and at the national level; on the system-wide standardization of social indicators; and on the elaboration of country strategy notes with the assistance of the United Nations system and under the leadership of the resident coordinator. It also supported the proposal to streamline United Nations efforts and focus on the most important projects and issues, according priority to infrastructure and the institutional framework at the country level.

41. The Russian Federation also agreed that priority should be given to indisputably improving the status of women and their participation in society and economic life. It was to be hoped that the Beijing Conference in 1995 would produce clear, practical guidelines for national policy and international coordination in that area.

42. Concerning the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, his delegation fully understood the urgency and severity of those countries' problems and supported United Nations efforts to provide assistance to them. However, because the Russian Federation itself was undergoing difficulties during the current transition period, it would have to curtail its multilateral assistance activities, including those carried out within the framework of the United Nations system, until such time as its economic situation was stabilized. In order to enhance the effectiveness of assistance to the least developed countries, continued use should be made of consultative groups and round tables on specific countries and groups of countries, for the particular characteristics of each country and each group of countries must be taken into account.

43. The Russian Federation was also determined to develop assistance and cooperation mechanisms that would be beneficial to both parties, such as capitalizing on the comparative (climatic, labour and other) advantages of certain countries, focusing, in particular, on trade and the participation of the private entrepreneurial sector, for, in that area - as was becoming apparent in practice - private entrepreneurship was much more dynamic, reliable and rapid

(Mr. Smirnov, Russian Federation)

than the inflexible State apparatus. Technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) also provided some opportunities. The report of the Secretary-General (A/48/491) gave a full account of the work of the United Nations system, particularly UNDP, and rightly stated that the role of the United Nations system should be limited to complementing the efforts of developing countries themselves. Problems in financing the relevant projects should also be viewed from that perspective.

44. Mr. NEBIE (Burkina Faso) stressed that, three years after the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries and two years before its mid-term review, the degradation of the economic, social, environmental and food situation of those countries gave more than sufficient cause for alarm. Per capita income had fallen between 1990 and 1992, and the outlook for 1993 was not encouraging. Nor did the Secretary-General of the United Nations find reasons for optimism in his report (A/48/333).

45. The figures, although they gave only a partial picture, were eloquent. The external debt of the least developed countries, which totalled US$ 116 billion, exceeded the gross domestic product (GDP) in some countries; in other countries, the outstanding debt stock was equivalent to two thirds of GDP. Servicing that debt absorbed 22 per cent of export earnings. As the prices of their export products had dropped, the participation of the least developed countries in world trade had declined from 0.6 to 0.3 per cent. Official development assistance (ODA) had also declined. In a number of least developed countries, there was a food shortage which would cost $865 million to remedy.

46. The Programme of Action, as stated in General Assembly resolution 47/173, should be implemented fully, effectively and on a timely basis by all parties. Burkina Faso, like other least developed countries, had launched a structural adjustment programme in 1991 and, in 1993, had applied for an enhanced structural adjustment facility.

47. It was to be hoped that the implementation of the economic declaration adopted by the members of the Group of Seven in Tokyo in July 1993 would contribute to the urgent implementation of the Programme of Action.

48. The Government of Burkina Faso, aware of the many dimensions of development, was attempting to achieve the integration of women in development by implementing the measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/48/70). Burkina Faso had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In Burkina Faso women, who represented 52 per cent of the population, held 22.5 per cent of civil service jobs at all levels of the political and administrative hierarchy. The principle of equal pay for equal work was applied. In order to integrate women in development, Burkina Faso had also adopted measures in the areas of education and training, health and family planning, and agrarian reform. Although the achievements had been modest, it should not be forgotten that progress in that area was not achieved solely by decrees and laws. Women themselves must mobilize and overcome the obstacles of a socio-cultural past which Burkina Faso had in common with many other countries.

49. Mr. SHARMA (Nepal) supported the views expressed by the Colombian representative on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and said that, despite the adoption of the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries, by the end of the past decade, most of those countries had seen a rise in population and poverty. The sad lessons of the past decade had even greater significance for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the 1990s, as the world situation had changed immensely.

50. The sweeping political changes in the modern world would release a huge volume of resources that had once been absorbed by ideological confrontation. No one deserved those peace dividends more than the poverty-stricken least developed countries. Those countries, in doing their share of the work as agreed in the Programme of Action for the 1990s, had democratized and embarked on large-scale economic reforms. They were currently facing the dual problem of political transition and the uncertainty brought about by the implementation of economic measures such as liberalization and the promotion of a market economy.

51. In its efforts to promote democracy and sustainable development, Nepal was in a similar situation. In order to strengthen its new democracy, Nepal needed accelerated socio-economic development to make its population realize that democracy represented progress and that it should ignore the siren song of the detractors of democracy and sustainable development.

52. The partnership between the international community and the least developed countries as set out in the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s made it necessary for both parties to fulfil their pledges. The least developed countries needed substantially increased official development assistance (ODA): because the current level of assistance was smaller than the investment requirements for accelerated growth; six more countries had been added to the list of the least developed countries; reforms in the international trading regime had not improved the adverse terms of trade or increased their participation in world trade; additional expenditure was needed for the implementation of Agenda 21; and some countries had also embarked on major political reforms.

53. Debt-servicing obligations continued to sap the economic strength of the least developed countries and consume resources that could be used for domestic investment. Nepal hoped that the forthcoming agenda for development would give priority to short- and medium-term measures to alleviate the debt burden, increase flows of assistance and meet other development needs. However, for medium- to long-term development, the most viable strategy would be to create a favourable world trading environment. The continuing decline in the terms of trade of the least developed countries must be arrested and barriers to their export goods and services must be reduced and eliminated.

54. The international community should play a catalytic role in promoting direct foreign investment in the least developed countries and continue to improve the Generalized System of Preferences. The industrial and the more advanced developing countries should encourage exports from the least developed countries into their countries. The international community should take into account the concerns of the least developed countries in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations.

(Mr. Sharma, Nepal)

55. Peace, stability and prosperity depended on the economic growth of the least developed countries and the reduction of the gap between haves and have-nots.

56. Mr. NKOUNKOU (Congo) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

57. His delegation appreciated the ideas on the role of women in development, contained in the preliminary version of the 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development. At the first scientific conference on the integration of women in development, held in the Congo in January 1993, three working groups had been formed to consider the representation of women in the modern sector, their participation in small and medium-sized enterprises and their role in the rural sector.

58. In the modern sector of the Congo, women had been incorporated in the wage system between 1929 and 1934; their representation in the civil service was 33.45 per cent and was concentrated in the fields of education, administration and health. In the sector of small- and medium-sized enterprises, it was currently recognized that the so-called informal sector provided work and income to a considerable percentage of the active population. According to a 1984 census, more than 60 per cent of informal-sector activities were concentrated in four large towns of the Congo, which accounted for almost 31 per cent of the country's jobs. In the towns, the participation of women in the informal sector was 53 per cent.

59. In the rural sector of the Congo, women constituted more than 60 per cent of the agricultural work force, produced more than 80 per cent of agricultural products for domestic consumption and, moreover, were largely responsible for the child-rearing and household chores. The activity of women in the modern sector, small- and medium-sized enterprises and the rural sector was affected by such problems as insufficient social and health services and a lack of financing and training. In the final version of the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, special attention should be given to the subject of rural women.

60. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that, although three years had elapsed since the adoption of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, no significant progress had been made to implement it. There was no denying that the least developed countries were primarily responsible for their own development. Most of them had made efforts to reorient their macroeconomic and sectoral policies. However, the unfavourable external environment had thwarted those initiatives. Since 1990, the least developed countries had experienced economic stagnation and a fall in per capita income, with negative to zero real growth in their overall gross domestic product (GDP) in 1991 and 1992.

61. That negative situation had not prevented many least developed countries, including Bangladesh, from carrying out courageous and often painful economic reforms. However, those reforms remained fragile and were often associated with high social costs borne by a large part of the population to whom the potential benefits were not immediately apparent. The full and timely implementation of

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s should receive the urgent attention of the international community.

62. The debt problem of the least developed countries continued to pose serious obstacles to economic development. The total long-term debt of the least developed countries was currently $116 billion; debt-relief schemes covered only part of the debt of the least developed countries, many of which had accumulated payment arrears. Multilateral service payments were also becoming burdensome. His delegation urged the international community and, in particular, the donors, to cancel all official debt of the least developed countries and encourage private creditors and multilateral institutions to take measures to alleviate the debt burden of those countries.

63. International trade could be a useful supplement to increase the availability of resources of the least developed countries. However, market access for products from least developed countries must be widened in order to reactivate their economic growth. The Final Act of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations should highlight the concerns and situation of the least developed countries.

64. It was also imperative that the international donor community should make efforts to increase their aid to the least developed countries in accordance with the commitments undertaken in the Programme of Action.

65. The environmental degradation of the least developed countries should receive urgent international attention. In order for those countries to be able to deal with the problems of soil degradation and erosion, drought, salinity, floods and cyclones, they must be provided with concessional financing and access to environmentally sound technologies.

66. With respect to economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, his delegation considered that subregional, regional and interregional cooperation should be strengthened. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation was helping to further economic and technical cooperation among the States of South Asia. The Buenos Aires Plan of Action and the Caracas Programme of Action remained valid, and his delegation urged the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to take expeditious action for their speedy implementation.

67. Mr. ZAIN (Malaysia) said that the productive role of women deserved further elaboration. That dimension should be extended to focus also on their role in the protection of the environment, the preservation of social ethics and family values and the prevention of drug abuse. There were still many obstacles to the effective participation of women in development, which were due to cultural and attitudinal factors. Women were paid less than their male counterparts even when they performed the same job. The problem of limited mobility was caused by gender stereotyping, which restricted women to limited areas of activities. For those reasons, a programme of action was urgently needed to improve the status and participation of women in the development of all societies; the programme of action should include the following elements: full recognition of the contribution of women through the elimination of gender stereotyping, particularly among educational and economic planners; industrial retraining that

(Mr. Zain, Malaysia)

imparted higher and more relevant skills to the female workforce in line with the major structural changes occurring in many societies, which would ensure that women would not be the main victims of structural unemployment; promotion of cultural values that enhanced women's access to education and skills training; the creation of the necessary infrastructure to support the participation of women in development; and equal pay for work of equal value and equal promotion opportunities for women.

68. In Malaysia, numerous programmes had been drawn up to enhance the mobilization and participation of the female labour force in development: the establishment of information networks providing information on the labour market, particularly to rural women; the provision of more child-care centres and hostels near to factories; and improved transportation between homes and places of work. A women's unit had been set up within the Ministry of National Unity and Social Development to formulate policies aimed at enhancing the status and participation of women in the economy.

69. His delegation supported the holding of the major conference on women in development to be held in Beijing in early 1995, and called upon more countries to ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

70. With respect to economic and technical cooperation among developing countries, there were serious structural bottlenecks that needed to be squarely addressed. One of those was the availability and accessibility of information on the needs and capacities of developing countries in TCDC and ECDC activities. The information available was clearly inadequate. There was a need for a more comprehensive database, particularly on current technology, which could be organized as an information network. There was also a need to reformulate or consolidate existing networks into an operational network with a specific focal point at the international level.

71. Primary responsibility for TCDC/ECDC lay with developing countries themselves, but developed countries and multilateral agencies had a responsibility to play a constructive role to contribute to its success. The developing countries suffered from financial and technological resource constraints which made it useful for TCDC/ECDC to be implemented in partnership with developed countries and multilateral agencies. That modality would be more cost-efficient and effective, especially if it increased local procurement and expanded the use of local expertise.

72. Regarding human resources development, it should be noted that one of the key elements in generating high rate of economic growth was the rapid development of human resources. That had been confirmed by a recent World Bank research report on the "East Asian miracle", which stressed that universal primary and secondary education were the key to producing a trainable workforce, so vital for successful industrialization. Such an enterprise, however, required huge public expenditure which Governments of many developing economies found hard to make. One way out was greater international cooperation in human resources development.

(Mr. Zain, Malaysia)

73. Governments in developed societies and the more successful developing countries could grant more free places in their universities and polytechnics to students from the poorer countries. Unfortunately, many developed countries had been insensitive to the need to train more manpower from developing countries, and had imposed a quota limiting the intake of foreign students, as well as raising tuition fees. The developed countries should regard the training of foreign human resources at their universities and polytechnics as a kind of technical assistance. Subsidies for the training of foreign students would make more skilled manpower available to developing countries. That would generate rapid growth to the benefit of world trade and international welfare.

74. Foreign investors and suppliers of capital goods from the developed countries could play a vital role in the generation of skills relevant to the needs of industry. Foreign investors could set up skills development centres in recipient countries to provide training to would-be workers who, on graduation, would possess skills that were relevant to the demands of employers. Suppliers of capital goods must ensure the transfer of technical know-how through the provision of training either at their headquarters or at factory sites in developing countries.

75. Mr. MURIITHI (Kenya) said that sustainable development was based on the development of human resources and required increased investment in education, improved working conditions and motivation and reward systems to increase productivity. Kenya had given high priority to the development of human resources. In the preparation of its seventh development plan the Government would focus on recovery and growth in the medium term. To that end, it intended to address four areas relating to human development: the creation of a macroeconomic environment to facilitate structural reform in order to achieve accelerated economic growth; an increase in productivity in all sectors of the economy as well as an increase in the real incomes of workers; the generation of employment in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy without compromising environmental concerns; and inclusion of the human dimension of development in order to encourage better utilization of available human resources and meet the basic needs of the people.

76. The developing countries that were implementing structural adjustment programmes encountered the difficulty that such reforms had negative effects on the most vulnerable groups, such as the poor, women and children. In the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, State budgetary allocations were not enough to cushion the negative effects of adjustments.

77. Kenya welcomed the various measures adopted by the United Nations to develop the capacities of developing countries in the area of human resources through operational activities. Nevertheless, the financial resources allocated for human resources development were inadequate owing to other government priorities, and there was a need for a substantial increase in financial resources from external sources as well as for technical assistance to supplement the efforts of the developing countries to develop their human resources. Priority should be given to the provision of assistance to strengthen human resources development institutions; to develop curricula for schools and training institutions; to train informal sector artisans and

(Mr. Muriithi, Kenya)

extension workers; to produce affordable equipment, textbooks and instruction materials as a cost-saving measure in education and training; to formulate employment and income-generating policies to develop the informal sector, particularly for women and young people; to increase the capacity for population policy formulation and planning and the strengthening of mother-child and primary health care; to develop entrepreneurship to advance private sector activities; and to strengthen institutions of higher learning and research to minimize training abroad.

78. Mr. HORIGUCHI (Japan) noted that three years had passed since the unanimous adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and said that his delegation welcomed the commitment of many of those countries to implement their own national plans in line with the Programme of Action. Given the difficult world economic situation, it was no easy task to achieve national goals relating to economic revitalization and the implementation of macroeconomic policies and structural reforms. Nevertheless, the international community had dedicated itself to establishing a sound international environment and supported the efforts of those countries to achieve their goals.

79. Economic and technical cooperation among developing countries was essential to the economic and social development of those countries. Primary responsibility for such cooperation lay with the developing countries themselves, but it was essential for developed countries and the United Nations system to provide assistance.

80. His Government had supported the activities of developing countries through multilateral bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) as well as through bilateral channels. One of its bilateral assistance programmes provided training in third countries.

81. Mention should be made of the satisfactory results of the recent Tokyo international conference on African development. The conference had considered the theme of Asian experience and African development in order to explore ways and means by which African countries might take advantage of the valuable experience accumulated by Asian countries in the process of national capacity-building. His Government had announced that in 1994 it would hold, in cooperation with UNDP, an Asian-African seminar in Asia with the intent of promoting activities relating to economic and technical cooperation among developing countries.

82. During his trip to East Asia in January, the Prime Minister of Japan had announced that Japan would provide US$ 500,000 for family-planning programmes in Indonesia through the United Nations Population Fund, $200,000 for South-South cooperation activities in Indonesia through UNDP, and 200 million yen to supply medical machinery and equipment for third-country training programmes for the rehabilitation of disabled persons.

(Mr. Horiguchi, Japan)

83. The ultimate purpose of human resources development was not to raise growth rates, but to build and enhance the national capacity of developing countries through sustainable human resources development. Japan would continue to contribute towards that goal by supporting the efforts of developing countries through the activities of the United Nations.

84. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) recalled that, in the three years since the Programme of Action had been adopted, the situation of the least developed countries had been marked by economic stagnation, shrinking per capita income and negative to zero real growth rates. Official development assistance had declined owing to growing budgetary constraints in donor countries. In addition to having been beset by recurring natural calamities such as drought and floods, the least developed countries were faced with the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons.

85. Nevertheless, some of the least developed countries, such as Benin itself, had undertaken major political and economic reforms. If those reforms were not to be in vain, it would be necessary for the international community to forgive at least part of the external debt of the least developed countries and to provide them with increased financial assistance.

86. A large increase in the inflow of external capital was urgently needed to supplement the limited saving capacity of the least developed countries. His delegation suggested that a special fund might be created within the framework of UNCTAD in order to strengthen the Programme of Action.

87. In its resolution 47/173 of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly had reaffirmed the urgency of an in-depth study of the financial implications of the application of the new criteria for identifying the least developed countries, as recommended previously by the Assembly in its resolution 46/156 of 19 December 1991 and by UNCTAD at its eighth session. Astonishingly, that study continued to be postponed. Moreover, the regional commissions had unfortunately still not initiated the periodic meetings that had been called for to evaluate progress on economic cooperation between the least developed countries and other developing countries. Benin regretted that the organs and bodies of the United Nations system had not implemented the sectoral appraisal process that was to be a part of the review and monitoring of the Programme of Action.

88. There had been a similar lack of response to appeals by the Assembly at its forty-sixth and forty-seventh sessions for the provision of extrabudgetary resources to ensure the participation of at least one representative of each least developed country in the annual reviews conducted by the Trade and Development Board.

89. The final act of the Uruguay Round should contain specific provisions in favour of the least developed countries, including the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers for commodities and manufactured products.

90. Paragraphs 57 to 90 of the report (A/48/333) summarized the action taken by organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to follow up the Programme of Action and relevant provisions of the Assembly. Many of the measures had already been taken or had at least been planned, but the least

(Mr. Biaou, Benin)

developed countries were unaware of them. The United Nations system in general, and UNCTAD in particular, should make them known, perhaps through their diplomatic missions and Ministries of Foreign Affairs, with a view to maximizing the potential of the Programme of Action.

91. According to paragraph 98 of the report, the Intergovernmental Group on the Least Developed Countries of UNCTAD was to meet in 1995 to carry out the mid-term review of the situation of those countries and to report to the General Assembly on progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action. That meeting should be held in August, or, at the latest, the beginning of September, so that there would be enough time to prepare the necessary documentation before the beginning of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

92. Mr. YALLOW (Gambia) said that, according to the Secretary-General's report, implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s had thus far failed to arrest the deterioration of their economies or to promote their sustained economic growth. The critical situation in those countries, particularly in Africa, was reflected in the stagnation of gross domestic product (GDP), the fall in per capita income and the inadequate performance of economic variables. Because of the lack of economic resources, which had been aggravated by unfavourable climatic factors, it was becoming increasingly difficult to carry out development programmes.

93. In the context of the Programme of Action, Gambia, like other least developed countries, had made tremendous efforts to reorient its macroeconomic and sectoral policies with a view to modernizing its economic environment, promoting grass-roots participation in the development process, strengthening its national, institutional and human resource capabilities, seriously addressing the problem of external debt and debt servicing and promoting private-sector activity.

94. Those positive efforts had not been matched or reinforced by any significant increase in external assistance, as called for in the Programme of Action. On the contrary, total official development assistance had declined considerably, thus accentuating economic penury, impeding a satisfactory solution to the problem of debt and debt servicing, and making it impossible to give priority, at least in the 1990s, to the development of human resources or to policies designed to contain population growth, revitalize the farm sector, improve food security or promote the effective generation and use of domestic saving.

95. For all those reasons, at their meeting in New York in September 1993, the Ministers of the least developed countries had adopted a statement pointing out that very few donor countries had met or exceeded the accepted United Nations target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance. That had serious consequences for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action, especially since the ratio of official development assistance to the respective GNPs of the Development Assistance Committee countries had fallen from 0.9 per cent in 1989 to 0.08 per cent in 1992, with a corresponding decrease in the share of the least

(Mr. Yallow, Gambia)

developed countries. The same seemed to hold true for assistance from multilateral financial institutions and organizations. The international community, in particular the developed countries, needed to be more sensitive to the socio-economic situation of the least developed countries. Donor countries should try to achieve the established targets and to meet the commitments they had made under the Programme of Action.

96. All official debt owed by the least developed countries should be forgiven and their bilateral debt should be cancelled. In order to stimulate their economic development, their access to the markets of developed countries should be expanded.

97. He hoped that, in 1995, the mid-term review of the Programme of Action would show an increase in the pace of implementation of the Programme and a growth in official development assistance, as well as qualitatively better technological resource flows which would enable the least developed countries to achieve sustainable development in an improved global economic climate.

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.3

98. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.3 entitled "Follow-up to the report of the South Commission", which was sponsored by Colombia on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that were members of the Group of 77 and by China and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, requested the correction of an error in the document. The asterisk that should have been placed next to the name of Colombia to indicate that it was acting on behalf of the Group of 77 had been mistakenly placed next to the name of China. The draft resolution requested that UNCTAD should prepare a regular and comprehensive biennial report on the state of South-South cooperation and that the first such report should be submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. He was confident that the draft resolution would obtain the consensus of all delegations.

AGENDA ITEM 97: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FINANCING OF DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.4

99. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.4 entitled "International conference on the financing of development", which was sponsored by Colombia on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that were members of the Group of 77, and by China and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The draft resolution requested that a report on the issue of financing and potential funding sources, prepared in close consultation with the World Bank and other bodies of the United Nations system, should be submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.